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OUR COLORED PLATE.

THE purpose of these colored plates has been misunderstood even by our kindest critics. It was not our intention to give such decorations as might be immediately available for use, but rather a combination of colors that would serve as suggestions of what produces harmonious, as well as incongruous, blendings and combinations. The High Colors of our first plate were purposely selected, that this might be the more easily done, and the designs of the plates were almost as divergent as they could possibly be made. We do not expect that any of the plates of our first three or four numbers will express the prevailing style of decoration, but they will be of undoubted value in the way of suggestions. One prominent merchant of this city found in the first plate, one panel which he caused to be incorporated into a fresco ceiling, now being executed in his residence, and was so well pleased with the evident value of the work, that he placed with us the largest advertising order that we have received.

As we said last month, our colored plate in this issue contains four colors, shown upon the margin. It embraces design for a ceiling, tiles and examples of stone carving that may also be applied to wood.

The ceiling is produced in shades of like colors, because the design of ornamentation is better suited to such a scheme of coloring. The alternation of dark and light grounds for the panels, with the contrasting figures of the design, bring out the motive of the decoration with great power, but in a quiet and very effective manner. Of course the principal color and its tints can be altered to suit the furnishings, etc., but the style of ornamentation should never be accentuated by colors that are in strong or striking contrast. By comparison with the exceedingly ornate and highly colored designs of the plate in the last number, the difference between a realistic or natural, and a conventional treatment of decorative subjects can easily be seen. In last month's plate almost every figure in the two ceilings is brought up, by shading, into strong relief, whereas in this plate every subject, both animal and floral, is flattened out (if that term may be used) in a most "conventional" manner.

The four tiles shown in the upper left corner are from the Alhambra, Spain, taken from the pavement originally laid in the *Court of the Lions*. The interlaced pattern, shown in each, was a favorite manner of ornamentation, and, like the square designs so often introduced, shows that a repetition of a few simple elements will produce the most beautiful and complicated effects.

We are indebted to Mr. Fernando Miranda, 55 Beaver street, New York, for these designs.

The small square ornament on the left hand side is from the wall of the Hotel Bourgtheroulde, Rouen, and is a good example of Renaissance work. It would serve very well for a panel.

The other illustrations are specimens of the capacity of the Romans for conventionalizing, and are taken from the Forum of Trajan and the Villa Medici, Rome. The leaf in this instance, is that of the acanthus. This form was a favorite one for use in this way, and figures in the capital of the graceful Corinthian columns. It will be observed the Roman idea of conventionalizing differed from that now prevailing, and their treatment admitted light and shade and relief. The interest in this manner of treating subjects is so great at this time, that it is felt sufficient to warrant an exposition of the ancient ideas in this direction, and for that reason the plates are given. It will also be noticed that human and animal figures are shown, which may be compared with those of to-day.

NATURE IN ART.

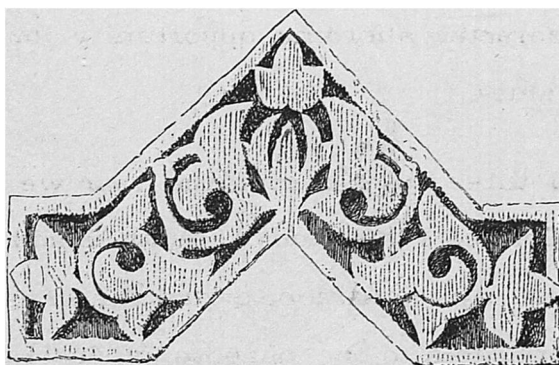
By F. EDWARD HULME, F.L.S., F.S.A.

A SERIES OF ARTICLES. No. ONE.

It has been laid down by a great English art critic, that "all noble art is the expression of man's delight in God's work," and though we may at first hesitate to accept so sweeping and comprehensive a statement, it will, we think, on fuller consideration, be found to be most literally true. The admirer of Greek art finds his greatest pleasure, not in the monotonous rows of dentils, or egg and tongue moldings, not even in the so-called honeysuckle ornament, beautiful as that sometimes is, but in the masterpieces of Phidias, Praxiteles and Myron where, in honor of the gods they represented, all that is noble in humanity is breathed into the living marble. In the earliest Greek sculptures, the deities were in animal forms, the discoveries of Dr. Schliemann afford numerous illustrations of this, and in Egyptian art, Phtah,

the cat-headed goddess, and Anubis, with his jackal's head, are other illustrations of the same sort of thing. Hindoo art revels in Ganesas, with the heads of elephants, or ten-armed deities, while South Sea Islanders fall down before grotesque and horrible monstrosities; but the later Greek clothed his conception of Deity in the form of man. His noblest work. And where grosser ideas strove to give the idea of strength by the semblance of the lion, or worshiped wisdom in the form of a serpent, the Greeks realized that the true strength was no mere animal force, the true wisdom, no cunning of crawling thing. It is curious, too, to notice that those who would desire to bespeak one God will, even for the lower types of Greek art we have mentioned, do so by trying to ally them with some suggestion of nature; that the dentils were at least suggestive of teeth, that the egg and tongue molding and the honeysuckle ornament were in some degree a tribute to natural forms. It is probable that, in any case, they rarely, if ever, did derive their inspiration from this source, but it is at least curious, as we have observed, that those who ask us to admire them give them these propitiatory titles. How far they really resemble any natural form may be seen in the fact, that what one witness calls egg and tongue, another calls egg and dart, while a third declares that it is based on the opening fruit of the horse-chestnut.

All Eastern art that is done under Mahommedan influence loses, irreparably, the highest charm, for the creed of Islam forbids the representation of any living thing. Architecture may flourish still, as we see in the grace of the palace of the Alhambra, in Granada, in the stately Mosque of Cordova, or in the magnificent Taj Mahal, of Agra, but the decoration employed must be of the most conventional and arbitrary character, and consists largely of intricate strap work and geometrical designs. The enjoyment of the old Gothic carver in the wayside weeds is impossible for them; no clustering capitals of hawthorn, no wreathings of the graceful maple are seen in their work, and the joy of the old Greeks in the olive, the acanthus, and the bay has no counterpart in the art of Islam. Painting,

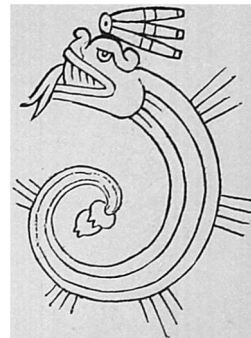


MORESQUE FOLIAGE.

therefore, and sculpture are wholly banished; while, shut out from all the higher possibilities of art, they have developed all that was accessible to them to a degree that no other men have ever done; the Celtic illuminations and stone carvings being the nearest approximation to the wealth of fancy and intricacy of detail shown in the simple elements, beyond which they were forbidden to pass. The same great critic, John Ruskin, in one of his books calls the art of the Alhambra "detestable." The word is a strong one, and here again we at first hesitate to accept so sweeping a verdict; yet here again, on fuller consideration one begins to realize that, in its cold lifelessness and formalism, the art of the Moors is wholly wanting in noble motive; and even where we cannot help considering that strong feeling has, perhaps, run into a little exaggeration of statement—such statements from men of influence and thought have at least this germ of good in them, that they compel thought in others. It is so much the custom to accept ideas at second-hand, and to allow our thinking to be done for us by other people, so much the habit to bow down before precedent, that a writer who arouses our antagonism by the strength of his assertions, before our sense of their truth has compelled our assent, does us an inconceivable service.

Ornamental art has its canons, no doubt, though the whole subject is full of difficulty, and matters have not reached the cut-and-dried stage that some authorities would have us believe. It is no doubt true, that where the trumpet gives uncertain sound, men cannot prepare themselves for the battle, but the same treasure-house of wisdom warns us equally against crying "peace, peace," where there is no peace. Men of such distinction in design as Owen Jones have laid down certain very definite laws, and the student gladly seizes on these as a hold-fast, yet when he turns to the writings of other men, such as Ruskin, he finds his anchor slipping and himself once again at sea.

Vigor of assertion will go far to compel assent, but such an assent is rudely shaken when a still more vigorous assertion saps its weak foundation. In our own younger days we sat at the feet of teachers, and imbibed their views in happy innocence, but this paradoxical state was too good to last. When in our youth we began the study of the French and German languages we were at first charmed by their simplicity; one found that all the words that ended in a certain letter were masculine, and all verbs of a certain formation were regular; one certainly did not altogether see why one should write with feminine ink on masculine paper, but this we accepted as one of the harmless eccentricities of La Belle France, while the broadness of the rules laid down for our guidance, though apparently very arbitrary, made their application at least a very easy matter. Our satisfaction was short-lived, the simple rule was followed by the ominous word "exceptions," and the symmetry of the whole thing was at once destroyed by a row or two of snares and pitfalls in smaller type. Our experience will touch an answering chord in many a heart, and the moral of this digression is sufficiently obvious. Chinese artwork is often offensively and deliberately ugly, yet much of it is well within the sheltering protection of the rules of some authorities, while Japanese art, instinct as it is with life and beauty, is as equally without the pale. The eighth proposition in the general principles laid down by Owen Jones at the commencement of his "Grammar of Ornament" runs as follows—"All ornaments should be based upon a geometrical construction." Here is a perfectly clear and simple rule, but if we accept it in all its rigidity, we must, there and then, thrust out as a heresy all the quaint beauty of Japanese art; we cannot at once pin our faith on Owen Jones and on Hishigaya Monobu. The fact is beyond dispute that many writers would exact from us a too rigid and a too narrow obedience. In matters of the law of the state, a man can be dragged before the statute book and judged at once, therefrom, and in questions of the moral law the still severer tribunal of a man's conscience will declare him guilty or not guilty; but in art matters we need a wider charity and freer scope than the law-makers are always willing to yield us. As a young student I was told that I must like Egyptian art better than Assyrian, and that the second was but a debased form of the first, yet I was never quite convinced; I exercise now my right of private judgment, and immensely prefer the latter. In pleading against dogmatism, one must be careful oneself not to dogmatize, but we may at least give the reason for the faith that is in us. Both are equally valuable archaeologically, and history is equally a gainer by the study of either. For in one we trace the career of the all conquering Pharaoh, pursuing his flying enemies or building his treasure cities, while in the other we find the mighty Sennacharib besieging his foes in their fastness, or taking right royal pleasure in the chase of the lordly lion; while in both we learn much incidentally of the daily life and pursuits of these ancient peoples. Artistically, we would draw a great difference between them.



MEXICAN RATTLESNAKE.

Why not attach to the upper sash of all large windows, some small fixture which in conjunction with a stick, would enable the house-keeper to open or close the sash without mounting a chair or step ladder?

YELLOW LACE, which is now a favorite, is by no means a modern fashion, for the Venetian belles found that the tint heightened the charm of their beauty, and employed yellow starch and saffron dye to secure the proper shade. The "craze" extended to England, and retained its popularity, until a female law-breaker was hanged in a yellow lace ruffle, by an executioner who wore cream colored wristlets and elaborate collar, in strict conformity with the esthetic demands of the times.

Why not, when you are selling an armure (this is for furniture dealers) or such a piece of furniture, recommend the buyer to spend two or three dollars or more, for a set of large casters? The amount of wear and tear, to say nothing of male and female bad words, that would be saved by such attachment, would undoubtedly be tremendous.

This Colored Plate contains Four Colors, as shown by the diagram on the lower margin. The plate that will accompany our next number will contain Ten Colors. The next Plate will be of Four Colors. Our purpose in thus varying the number of colors used, is that we may present designs of moderate as well as highly finished character, affording opportunity for decoration of different values.

About three times during the year we will probably omit this Colored Plate, and in its place add four or more pages to our regular edition, giving the finest pictures and designs, applicable to the purpose of decoration, that we can find in foreign publications.

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